

LONG BEACH
Heritage Museum

Preserving the best of the past for the future

Newsletter

Volume 2

Fall/Winter 2008

No 2

RED CAR REVOLUTION

By Douglas R. Pricer

Today, with its excellent schools and churches, a diverse population of nearly 500,000 residents, and a thriving harbor that serves as a gateway to the world, it's almost impossible to imagine Long Beach as a backwater village in the shadow of Los Angeles.

But, in 1900, that's exactly what it was when a mere 2,252 people called the sleepy seaside community home. In those days, the town's primary attractions were its beaches, a string of modest hotels, a God-fearing and temperate population, and a fondness for Christian camp-meetings and revivals.

The largest building in town was called The Tabernacle that, along with smaller venues, hosted a large influx of mid-westerners who flocked to town each summer for church camps, revival services and Chautauqua meetings. But all that changed with the arrival of a retired army Colonel and millionaire named Charles Rivers Drake.

A native of Walnut Prairie, Illinois by way of Arizona, Drake had enjoyed a successful career as a military man, a politician, and most importantly, a very successful businessman. When he saw the quiet little burg atop the bluffs, with its lovely beaches, deep blue skies, and sweeping views of the Pacific, he immediately grasped its potential.

Wasting no time, he quickly purchased a strip of beachfront property extending from present day Alamitos Avenue, west to the mouth of the San Gabriel River and announced plans to build an opulent bathhouse.

Colonel Drake was a realist, and correctly reasoned that if he built it, people would come, but only if they had a cheap and convenient way to get there. With those intentions, he joined forces with an old acquaintance named Henry E. Huntington.

Huntington was a railroad man who'd earned his spurs at the side of his uncle Collis, one of The Big Four barons responsible for building the transcontinental railway. When Collis died in 1900, Henry inherited an enormous fortune, moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles and pursued a keen interest in interurban transportation.

The result was the Pacific Electric Railway or "Red Cars" that ultimately ran throughout Los Angeles and its surrounding counties and as far south as Newport Beach.

When Drake told Huntington of his plans to invest \$100,000 in a bathhouse and his transportation needs, Huntington quickly saw the potential and, despite the strident objections of the town's religious leaders who wanted to keep Long Beach God-fearing and teetotaling, agreed to build a \$1 million rail line running from his terminal at 6th and Main Streets in Los Angeles to the corner of Ocean Park Avenue (now Ocean Boulevard) and Pacific Avenue.

Thus on the sunny summer morning of July 4, 1902, Long Beachers awoke to the clang of the trolley bell and the sound of Huntington's Red Cars rumbling down American Avenue (now Long Beach Boulevard).

The day was a smashing success. Before the sun set over the rolling surf line, an estimated 60,000 visitors had swept into town, swamped Drake's newly opened bathhouse and frolicked in the warm Pacific waters. They also celebrated the holiday with fireworks and revelry and, to the mortification of local church fathers, were seen drinking beer!



Indeed, the turnout was so great it choked the town's limited hotel capacity, and thousands of visitors were forced to sleep on the beach before returning to Los Angeles the next day. Of the event Press-Telegram reporter Jack Baldwin wrote in 1963, "Official records show that from that day on Long Beach grew like a weed. No other factor ... would contribute as much to the growth of Long Beach as the Pacific Electric Railroad."

Charles Rivers Drake stayed on in his newly adopted home and became a prominent civic leader. His bathhouse became known as "The Plunge" and served as a cornerstone for a string of other amusements that grew into Long Beach's "Walk of a Thousand Lights" and ultimately "The Pike".

A few years after he brought the Red Cars to town, Drake organized a group of prominent investors and built the opulent Hotel Virginia. Later, so his wealthy guests would have a place to play golf, he developed the exclusive Virginia Country Club (located on the site presently occupied by the Recreation Park Golf Course), and kept it solvent by purchasing all the memberships, even though he himself was not a golfer.

Charles Drake died in the penthouse suite of his beloved Hotel Virginia in June of 1928. Five years later the hotel itself fell prey to the Great Depression and was ripped down to make way for a bowling alley.

The last Red Car passenger line between Los Angeles and Long Beach ceased operations in 1961, and three years later freight service was halted as well.

Today, a few yards of aging railroad track in Signal Hill is all that's left of the once vibrant transportation system that revolutionized Long Beach and launched it into the modern age.

Although school children play in a city park named in his honor, few people remember Charles Drake, and fewer still appreciate his contributions to our city.

But, if one listens closely on soft summer mornings before the buzz of traffic fills the air on Ocean Boulevard, it's still possible to hear the rumble and clang of the Red Cars that a visionary Colonel named Charles Rivers Drake brought to a sleepy little church town by the sea.

City Auditor Laura Doud Hosts Open House To Celebrate 100th Anniversary of the Office of the Long Beach City Auditor

LONG BEACH, CA. - Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud welcomed Long Beach Heritage Museum and over 200 community members as well as city, county, and state officials to an Open House in her City Hall office on 11/18/2008 to commemorate 100 Years of the City Auditor's Office.

The day honored all former City Auditors who have served Long Beach. "This centennial occasion allows us to honor City Auditors who have come before us and also serves as a reminder to do all we can to promote excellence and efficiency in government. This is the legacy of the Long Beach City Auditor's Office, and we are pleased to carry this legacy forward," Doud stated.

During the ceremonies, City Auditor Doud recognized former City Auditor Bob Fronke who was in attendance as "a man I

admire for his principles and integrity, who has been a great example to me." Visitors toured the newly-dedicated Myrtelle L. Gunsul Conference Room to view the exhibit of the life and career of Miss Gunsul, who served as Long Beach's 5th elected City Auditor from 1919 until her retirement in 1951.

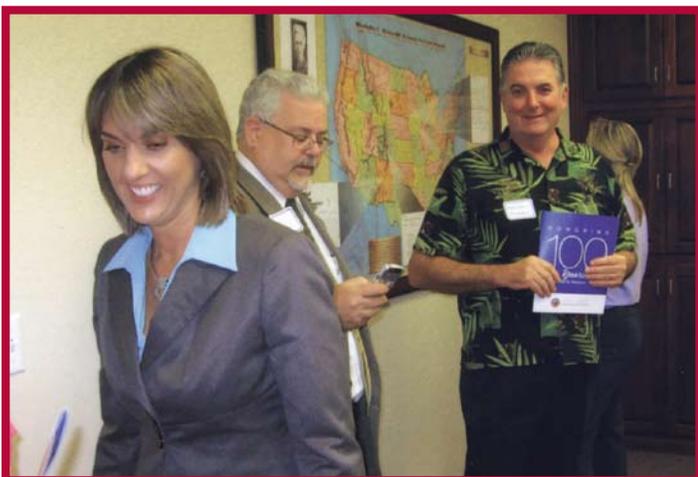
City Auditor Doud continued, "As Miss Gunsul said, 'Public office is public trust.' Our office takes this trust seriously, and we are committed to ensuring that taxpayers get the most for their hard-earned tax dollars. The Conference Room is now a living tribute to Miss Gunsul's extraordinary life and commitment to public service in Long Beach. By dedicating this Conference Room to her, we will keep her values and principles alive in our memories and in our daily actions."



Ken Larkey and Linda Penrod, Volunteer Receptionist



Marshall Pumphrey, Laura Doud and Ken Larkey



Laura Doud, Councilman Val Lerch & LBHM VP Marshall Pumphrey



Ken Larkey and Olivia Maiser, Director of Communications

THE GIFT OF HISTORY

Today, the preservation and understanding of our history is vitally important not only to our personal future, but to the future of our city as well. We live as we do today because of the achievements and sacrifices of those who came before us. To understand our place in time, to know who we truly are, to comprehend what we stand for and to face the future with courage, we need our history. The founders of the Long Beach Heritage Museum realized this. Their goal was to collect and to preserve Long Beach's continuing history and to share it with others. Today, the Museum is the primary repository of our collective cultural heritage and ethnic diversity. It captures the sweep of human imagination, exploration and inquiry, revealing what we know about ourselves and the world around us. The Museum is continually improving and expanding its comprehensive collections with additional acquisitions through numerous gifts and purchases. The Museum showcases recent additions to our archives by celebrating and honoring the many donors and supporters who have made possible the growth of our distinguished collections by offering the invaluable gift of history along with their financial gifts to the Museum's building trust fund. The Museum gratefully thanks the many following donors for

their support and gifts to the building fund: Marjoie Hanson, Jacqueline Harris, Jackie Smith of "Acres of Books", Collette McLaughlin, Laura Stahlberg, Dennis McGorman, Carol Jacoby, William Bayless, Dorthy Blasdell, Mike Cincola of "Looff's Lite-A-Line", Bill & Zettia Miller, Gordon Bateman, Judy Gumbiner, Raymond Berbower, Mr & Mrs Burton Larkey, Beverlee Larkey, Mr & Mrs Glenn Harmonson, Claudine Burnett, Cynthia Smith, Patricia Waide, Border's Books, Susan Quint, Robert Harden, Bob & Pamela Bishoff, Harvey Keller, Ronald Schweitzer, Leslie Herbst, SCS Engineers, Cathrine Smith, William Cwiklo, Betty Boop's Car Care, Kelsick Real Estate, Christina Yanis, William Rosselot, Maureen Neeley, Dorothy Main, Barry & Kathy Blodgett, Dominique Schwemzfeier, Leamel Comparette, Kevin & Ana Maria McGuan, Doug & Marge Talley, John Thomas, Richard Douce, Holly Ly, Gregory Toyoda, Ronald Janus, Chris Fukunaga, Joseph Mello, Ada Wartenberg, Kenlar Publishers, Joseph Laden, Surf Riders Foundation, Randy & Leslie Arrington, Bob De Spain, E.J. Miles, John Morris Sports Bar, L.B. Municipal Airport, Walker Family & Farmers & Merchants Bank, Julie & Larry Souverville, Long Beach Police Historical Society, Nancy Sugiyama, Diane Geishuny, Larry Osterboudt and Marshall Pumphrey.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS HAVE HAD A BUSY YEAR

The Museum and its volunteers had a busy year in 2008. We were invited to participate in various preservation venues and fund raising events. September 9th we had a booth and our museum exhibit at the annual Belmont Shore Classic Car Show on Second Street. The Museum in the past two years has had our roller coaster car on display so people could have their picture taken while seated in it. This year we brought a 1956 classic Chrysler Imperial car to display and represent the Museum. It was quite a hit with all those that stopped by to visit our Museum display. Museum membership applications were available for those visitors that wanted to join the Museum. On September 21st the Museum was asked to set up the Museum's exhibits and displays for the Rose Park Restoration Trade Fair at the Burbank School. We had a great show at this event with large crowds stopping by the Museum's exhibits and buying the Museum's Long Beach history books, which gave the Museum more public exposure. On October 5th the Museum was invited by Ryan Smolar of the Smolar Corp. to take part in their University by the Sea to have our Museum represented at their East Village Street Fair at First Street and Linden Avenue. Linden Avenue was closed to auto traffic from Ocean Blvd. to Broadway. The street was filled with canopies and tents with all kinds of arts and crafts along with live music. It was a full, busy day. They had the Museum and the Heritage Coalition set up display tables in the elegant Lafayette Hotel lobby where we greeted lots of visitors, some going upstairs to the University by the Sea classes. Volunteers Marshall Pumphrey, Christina

Yanis and Morgan Humphrey were on hand most of the day, helping out and answering important questions. We answered the same question over and over about the other preservation groups and the difference between them and the Long Beach Heritage Museum. There are four preservation organizations in Long Beach, not counting the two Ranchos. There is the **Long Beach Heritage Museum**, that preserves local history and things that you might expect, like photos, news clippings, directories, films, etc. The Museum also has a substantial collection of authentic Long Beach memorabilia and artifacts. Membership is \$20.00 a year. **Wilmore Heritage Association**, which is made up primarily of a group of homeowners living on the west side of Long Beach. They preserve historical homes. Membership \$20.00. **The Historical Society of Long Beach** promotes, archives and exhibits Long Beach history. They have a vast collection of photos, directories, books, etc. Membership \$40.00. **Long Beach Heritage Coalition** is an education and advocacy group promoting public knowledge and preservation of significant historic and architectural resources, neighborhoods and the cultural heritage of Long Beach. Membership \$30.00. From reading the above information you can understand that the Long Beach Heritage Museum is truly a history museum. *See event photos on Page 4 & 5*

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift, that's why they call it the present."

Eleanor Roosevelt, 1884-1962

MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Belmont Shore Classic Car Show, September 9, 2008



Christina Yanis, Ken Larkey, Marshall Pumphrey and Morgan Humphrey



Museum display



Museum's '56 Chrysler Imperial

Rose Park Restoration Trade Fair, September 21, 2008



Marshall Pumphrey, Christina Yanis & Maureen Neeley



Morgan Humphrey & Marshall Pumphrey



Cyclone Roller Coaster on display with Volunteers



Visitors at the Museum's exhibit

MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

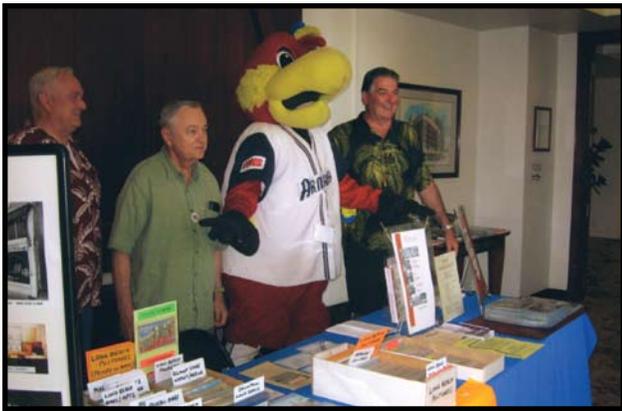
University by the Sea Event, October 5, 2008



Crowds viewing the various exhibits



Museum display table



Morgan and Marshall with Armada Mascot



Visitors at the Museum's booth

A few of the Museum's Artifacts in Storage



Long Beach Fire Department Hydrants



1939 City Bus Fare Box



City Street Parking Meter



1928 Seal for the Pacific Southwest exposition

Pacific Electric Story

LONG BEACH - 1901

The information presented here was obtained from the Evening Tribune for June, July, August, September and October 1901 as well as from a few issues of the Long Beach Press.

The Evening Tribune, under the direction of T.W. Lincoln, started publishing December 2, 1900. Lincoln had picked up the remains of the Tribune at a sheriff's sale. Many doubted it would succeed since there wasn't enough business in Long Beach to support it, and it took an anti-saloon editorial stance. It tried to get Associated Press dispatches, but found the three Los Angeles dailies had a monopoly on the AP wires within a 50-mile radius. Despite early financial losses, it succeeded, proving to be something needed in the community.

THE ELECTRIC RAILROAD

Electric street railways, around since the late 1880s, quickly replaced horse-drawn cars used by many rail lines. By the turn of the twentieth century there were 8,000 miles of track in the United States, 50 of these miles owned by the Los Angeles Railway (James Thorpe Henry Edwards Huntington p. 182). The track and equipment of the Los Angeles Railway was in bad shape, the service was poor, and the company was losing money. In 1898, Henry Edwards Huntington stepped into the picture when a syndicate, in which he had controlling shares, bought the ailing Los Angeles Railway Company.

Henry Huntington came to California in 1892 to work with his Uncle Collis on the Southern Pacific Railroad. Other owners in the SP included Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford and the three major stockholders did not always agree. Charles Crocker, for example, repeatedly urged Collis to have the railroad buy land around Los Angeles to lay more tracks. In 1887, he urged the purchase of the 120,000-acre San Joaquin Ranch, later known as the Irvine Ranch, for sale at the time for \$1,250,000. Collis had other ideas for the company; he wanted to build railroads in Mexico and a port at Santa Monica. Caught between the powerful three, Henry's role was to scout out land in Southern California for SP development. In 1894 and 1895, young Huntington arranged for the railroad to extend its line to Pasadena; along the way he fell in love with Southern California.

The period between 1895-1900 was a chaotic one for the Southern Pacific. First, Charles Crocker collapsed at dinner and died on July 17, 1897. In 1898, Collis wrote to Henry asking him to resign as a director of the SP because a power struggle was going on behind the scenes. The other three owners threatened not to vote for Collis as president of the SP. They felt they had too little voice in the management of the company and that Henry was Collis' puppet, putting Collis' ideas ahead of theirs. The game was not over. The wily Collis played the other owners against each other. Eventually Henry entered the picture again, as a director and second vice president of the SP. But everything

changed on August 13, 1900 when Collis Huntington died. Henry, as one of his uncle's major benefactors, received about \$14 million dollars.

Henry was tired of the power plays going on behind the doors of the Southern Pacific. He arranged to sell his SP stock to E.H. Harriman, an owner of the competing Union Pacific, giving effective control of the SP to Harriman. Henry Huntington now spent his time, and money, on his true love: building his own electric railway in Southern California.

In 1900 and 1901, Huntington launched a plan to better the Los Angeles Railway by improving service, buying smaller rail companies, and building new lines. In 1901, as his program moved along, he obtained a franchise from Monrovia to South Pasadena. He also bought the Mt. Lowe Railway in 1900 and the Los Angeles and Pasadena Electric Railway Co. in 1902. This burst of activity required more money than the Los Angeles Railway Company had or could borrow, and in 1901 Huntington formed another corporation, the Pacific Electric Railway Company (into which several companies were merged) to build and operate urban and electric railways in the Los Angeles area. Huntington put up about \$100,000 out of the total of \$140,000 for a 70 percent ownership.

In 1903 and again in 1906, Henry came to heads with both the Southern Pacific and E.H. Harriman (whom he had sold his stock to). In 1903 Harriman and the SP were threatening to muscle into the street railway business in Southern California. Henry worked out an elaborate compromise with Harriman by which the Pacific Electric acquired a couple of small street railway companies, several rights-of-way and land owned by the SP. Harriman and Huntington each owned 40 percent of the Pacific Electric stock, with the other 20 percent owned by I.W. Hellman. In 1906, the struggle between Huntington and Harriman for control of the street railways in Southern California broke out again. In March 1906 Harriman bought out a competing line on his own, challenging Huntington's control of the trolley traffic. Compromises were reached, but it wasn't until September 1909 when Harriman suddenly died, that Huntington could rest assured that he was truly in control of the street railways in Southern California.

H.E. Huntington had several connections to Long Beach through the Bixbys of Rancho Los Alamitos. His son, Howard, who would take over the daily operations of the Pacific Electric, married Mrs. Fred Bixby's cousin, Leslie. Fred Bixby's brother-in-law, Dr. Bryant, also entered the picture as Henry Edwards Huntington's personal physician.

PACIFIC ELECTRIC

The question on everyone's mind was whether the new Pacific Electric railway would come into Long Beach. The Salt Lake

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

railroad, which occupied the entire ocean front, had such a strangle hold on the city, it seemed unlikely. The Salt Lake had fought the introduction of other electric railways so successfully that Long Beach was one of the few communities in Los Angeles County without one. The Salt Lake railroad had a monopoly in Long Beach, one of the issues that President McKinley had been about to confront before his untimely death. However, things in town were about to change with the arrival of Charles Rivers Drake.

CHARLES R. DRAKE

Charles Rivers Drake visited Long Beach from Arizona whenever he could. He liked the climate, the hunting and fishing and the business opportunities. Though he made millions in Arizona mining and railroad ventures, Drake was a man who couldn't rest, even in retirement. He needed to get involved in something, and this "something" turned out to be the development of the beach in Long Beach.

In May 1901, Drake arranged to buy the holdings of the Long Beach Development Company, the Bouton Water Company and parts of the Banning Company. His new company was called the Seaside Water Company, which would later develop the beach amusement area known as the "Pike". Soon after his purchases, he was asked by Huntington to be his agent in trying to obtain electric railway rights into Long Beach. Drake was an old friend of Huntington, having worked with him before on the Southern Pacific railway. Drake agreed and on June 24, 1901 he asked the city's Board of Trustees for a franchise, headed by Henry E. Huntington and I.W. Hellman, to build a trolley system from Los Angeles to Long Beach. Drake's interest in the interurban line, he told the Trustees, was solely as an investor in a seaside resort that would like more tourists. He astutely pointed out that the Salt Lake railway was a monopoly which paid the city nothing in the way of taxes. The electric railway would pay the city \$2,000 a year for the right to come into town.

One problem was the controversy surrounding the need for additional tracks on Ocean Park Avenue (later renamed Ocean Boulevard). Residents had been trying to have the railroad tracks removed, now they were being asked to put in a new set of rails. Merchants and real estate agents joined in urging approval for the trolley franchise, residents agreed that one was needed, but not along the ocean front. In August, fearing the interurban railway would not be approved, Drake played his trump card. He told the Trustees that if the railway was approved there was a good chance Huntington would build a wharf in the city and develop the city's harbor. This was all the business interests in the city needed to hear—they were anxious to develop the Long Beach side of San Pedro Bay into a profitable seaport. These promises led city fathers to approve the Ocean Avenue route, over the protests of many of its citizens.

There were legal issues the city had to address. Long Beach could not just hand the right to build an electric railway to Huntington

and Drake because there were other interested parties. In April 1900, the Townsend Brothers had requested a franchise; it was put on hold because of the Ocean Park Avenue controversy. In April 1901, Frank Porter had applied for the rights; in June, W.H. Holabird deposited \$1705 with the City Trustees to secure a franchise. By August 1901, the rail route question settled, the city decided to open the electric railroad franchise to competitive bidding.

Rumor had it that the Salt Lake people were going to outbid Huntington for the rights; they didn't want any competition in what they considered "their town." The general public was excited over all this gossip and gathered en masse to hear the bids read at the City Council meeting on October 28th. They were not disappointed; they got an ear full.

Everyone was astounded by the dollar figures they heard. When the first bid was opened, a figure of \$7,200 was disclosed. The audience and the city fathers were speechless over such a large amount. It was from someone they had never heard of, an Elijah Bancroft. Was he working for the Salt Lake railroad contingent? Col. Holabird immediately challenged the bid on the grounds that it did not follow the rules set down for the bid process: Elijah Bancroft had neglected to state he would pay in gold coin, a matter spelled out in the rules. Holabird's complaint was referred to the City Attorney, who took some time to consider the matter. In the meantime other bids were opened. The next bid opened was for \$2,500, made by H.H. Hamilton, a local businessman. Frank R. Porter quickly followed with \$3,200. One from Epes Randolph for \$2,600, accompanied by cash, was read. Randolph was representing the Huntington Company.

In the meantime, the City Attorney stated that Col. Holabird's objection was not valid, because the bid process stated the bidder had 24 hours in which to deposit the cash. But who was Elijah Bancroft? He was not in the room, and neither was the gold. The Mayor proceeded by calling for a 10 percent increase on the highest bid. There was confusion. Was the mysterious Bancroft's bid still in the running? After a period of silence, H.H. Hamilton raised Bancroft's bid by the required amount. This was promptly met by Epes Randolph, who agreed to pay \$9600 for Huntington's right to the franchise. The price was now too high for the others, and the Huntington Railway Company was awarded the right to bring their electric railway into the City. The Long Beach line would be the first complete interurban link built by Huntington and one of the most successful in the entire system.

Coincidentally perhaps, Drake's plans for developing his beach front amusement area coincided exactly with Huntington's building of the Pacific Electric railway. A new era for Long Beach was about to begin.

Long Beach Heritage Museum

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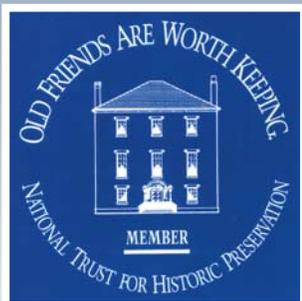
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*Celebrate the past.
Nurture the future.
Delight in the moment.*

LONG BEACH HERITAGE MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Members will receive newsletters and all special mailings.

Name _____
Last First

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone Home () _____ Work () _____

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Would you be interested in volunteer work?

Yes No

One-Year Membership \$20.00

Building Fund donation:

\$1,000 \$500 \$100

\$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

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New Website: www.longbeachheritagemuseum.org

Email: information@longbeachheritagemuseum.com

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